DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 357 736 IR 016 130

AUTHOR Saga, Hiroo
TITLE Students' and Tutors' Perceptions of Learning at Allama Iqbal Open University.
PUB DATE 12 Nov 92
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the World Conference of the International Council for Distance Education (16th, Nonthaburi, Thailand, November 9-13, 1992).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; *Distance Education; *Educational Media; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Instructional Effectiveness; Questionnaires; *Student Attitudes; *Student Motivation; Tables (Data); Teacher Attitudes; Tutors; Undergraduate Students; Undergraduate Study
IDENTIFIERS *Allama Iqbal Open University (Pakistan); Student Surveys; Teacher Surveys

ABSTRACT

This study was designed to find out why and how students of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) in Pakistan learn through its distance education system. Questionnaire surveys of the students and tutors were conducted in November and December, 1990. Out of 1,650 randomly selected B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) students, 661 students returned the questionnaire. About 25% of the respondents were female, and their ages ranged from 18 to 59 with an average of 30. Students' motives for studying were much clearer than those at the University of the Air in Japan. The highest responses were shown on the items of "love studying in itself" and "want to make up for my past lack of studies." The students were generally confident of success at AIOU and perceived they had achieved their course work satisfactorily. They evaluated textbooks and assignments as very effective, but some of them were not able to attend tutorial sessions. Over 80% owned their radio sets, and television was accessible by 60%. The students perceived reading textbooks as the most important element of their study. Questionnaires were returned from 188 tutors. Nearly 60% had experience as an AIOU tutor for more than 3 years. The tutors perceived reading textbooks, doing assignments, and meeting the tutors as the most important elements of studying for students at AIOU. Many of them perceived that AIOU students' motivation was higher than that of other regular college students. Their proposals for improving the instructional method of AIOU were also obtained. (Eight tables present data.) (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Students' and Tutors' Perceptions of Learning at Allama Iqbal Open University

ED357736

Paper presented at the 16the World Conference of the International Council for Distance Education, November 9-13, 1992, Sukhothai Thamatirat Open University, Nonthaburi, Thailand.
(Summary is printed in *the Conference Abstracts; Distance Education for the Twenty-First Century*, pp. 148-149, © International Council for Distance Education, 1992.)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

Hiroo Saga
Associate Professor
National Institute of Multimedia Education
2-12, Wakaba, Mihama-ku, Chiba-shi, Japan 261

Abstract

This study was designed to find out why and how students of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) learn through its distance education system. Questionnaire surveys of the students and tutors were conducted in November and December, 1990. Out of 1,650 randomly selected B.A.students, 661 students returned the questionnaire. About 25% of the respondents were female, and their ages ranged from 18 to 59 with an average of 30. Students' motives for studying were much clearer than those at the University of the Air in Japan. The highest responses were shown on the items of "love studying in itself" and "want to make up for my past lack of studies". The students were generally confident of success at AIOU and perceived they had achieved their course work satisfactorily. They evaluated textbooks and assignments as very effective, but some of them were not able to attend tutorial sessions. Over 80% owned their radio sets, and TV was accessible by 60%. The students perceived reading textbooks as the most important element of their study. Questionnaires were returned from 188 tutors. Nearly 60% had experience as an AIOU tutor for more than three years. The tutors perceived reading textbooks, doing assignments, and meeting the tutors as the most important elements of studying for students at AIOU. Many of them perceived that AIOU students' motivation was higher than that of other regular college students. Their proposals for improving the instructional method of AIOU were also obtained.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Hiroo Saga
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

120161 30

Purpose

The general aims of this study are to understand why and how students at

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Allama Iqbal Open University learn through its distance education system and how the instruction through this system is functioning effectively. Based on this knowledge, it would be possible to have suggestions to improve teaching and learning processes at the University. This study also attempts to make comparison with similar institutions in Asia. In line with these general aims, this study has the specific objectives to find out;

1) Students' motives to be enrolled in and study at the University,
2) Students' recognitions for their achievements of the course work,
3) Functioning of instructional components in particular courses,
4) Uses of radio and TV programmes,
5) Tutors' recognitions for their own work,
6) Tutors' recognitions for students' learning, and
7) General social background as related to students' motives.

Method

1. Outline

To achieve the above aims, this study was carried out through two questionnaire surveys (one to the students, and the other to the tutors), and face-to-face interviews of the students and tutors. The questionnaire survey of the students would cover the objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4. To maintain comparability with other Asian institutes, a sample of the students were selected from those who were in B.A. courses. The questionnaire survey and interview of the tutors would deal with the objectives 5 and 6. The interview of the students would focus on the objective 7. The questionnaire and interview items were prepared by the author in cooperation with Dr. M. Daud Awan, Director of the Research and Evaluation Centre of AIOU. The surveys were conducted in November and December, 1990, by the joint team of Japanese and Pakistani researchers. Dr. Daud Awan and the author directed the team cooperatively.

2. Questionnaire survey of the students

The questionnaire was originally produced in English, which was then translated into Urdu. Either one of these versions was used according to the nature of the courses the students were taking. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part was about students' demographic attributes, their motives for studying at AIOU, and their perceptions of media for learning. The second part asked about students' learning, and the third part was about students' use of radio and TV programmes and their perceptions of instructional components.

The subjects consisted of 1,650 students who were randomly selected from the computerized list of the four B.A. level courses of "Economics", "Islamic Studies", "Food and Nutrition", and "Population Education" for the Spring-1990 semester. The questionnaires were sent to their homes in early November, 1990. By mid-December, 661 students or 40.1% of the sample returned the questionnaire.

3. Questionnaire survey of the tutors

The questionnaire was prepared in the same manner as that of the students. It consisted of two major parts. The first part was about tutors' demographic attributes and their own work, and the second part contained questions about tutors' recognition for students' performance, relative importance of instructional components at AIOU, and proposals for improving the instructional system.

The subjects were selected from two sources: first, all the 216 tutors whose names were listed on the same four courses for the student sample; and second, additional 200 tutors randomly selected from the list of several other courses. A total of 416 questionnaires were sent in early November, of which 188 tutors or 45.2% returned the questionnaire by mid-December.

4. Interviews of the students and tutors

Interviews were conducted with the selected students and tutors during November and December at the four AIOU regional offices of Rawalpindi, Karachi, Peshawar, and Lahore. A total of 75 students were interviewed on their social background, purposes of study, aspects of learning, daily lives, and future plans. A total of 17 tutors were interviewed on their social background, recognition for their work as tutors, and students' learning.

Results and Discussion

Results of the questionnaire survey of the students

1. Profile of the students

A total of 661 questionnaires were returned for analysis, of which 424 (64%) were students from "Islamic Studies", 14% were from "Population Education", 12% were from "Economics", and 10% were from "Food and Nutrition". About 25% were female students, and their ages ranged from 18 to 59 with an average of 30 as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' gender and age

Gender	Number	Min. Age	Max. Age	Average	S.D.
Male	490 / 474	18	59	30.2	7.4
Female	170 / 166	18	51	27.7	6.8
Total	660 / 640*	18	59	29.5	7.3

*One student's gender was unknown, and 21 students' ages were unknown.

42% of the students were school teachers, and 35% were in public service. 45% were from cities, 42% from villages, and 12% from towns. 408 students or 62% came from the state of Punjab.

2. On entering AIOU

Many students (38%) mentioned that they knew about AIOU from newspapers, followed by friends (28%), family members (9%), radio (9%), and TV (7%).

As for the motives for entering and studying at AIOU, the students were requested to answer on each of the 11 four-point scales of which the point ranged from "accurate" (point 1) to "inaccurate" (point 4). The results are shown in Table 2, in which the smaller the average point is, the more "accurate" that particular statement is perceived to be. The highest reaction was shown on the items of "love studying in itself" (item 3; average point=1.22) and "want to make up for my past lack of studies".(item 4; average point=1.28). These points tended to be much higher than those of the students of the University of the Air in Japan, suggesting that social backgrounds of seeking alternative ways of higher education may be different between Pakistan and Japan.

Students' free answers on their personal goals of studying at AIOU revealed that they generally tended to seek higher educational qualifications and obtain newer knowledge. Over 70% decided to enter AIOU by themselves. Almost half of those who answered they were influenced by others mentioned influence from their friends.

3. Students' attribution of learning from textbook, radio, and TV

Questions on how students perceive textbooks, radio, and TV were given in terms of the sources of attribution of their success and failure of learning when they learn from these media. As a result, the students tended to attribute the outcome of learning from textbooks to their efforts, but learning from TV was attributed more to the ease of the programmes. When asked "A student like you read a textbook and understood it well. What is the best reason why that student understood that textbook?", 45% answered "because that student tried hard". In the case of TV, however, the same answer was given by only 15%, while 46% answered "because TV is always easy". AIOU students generally appeared to think that they can learn from textbooks because they make efforts, and that they can learn from TV because TV is easy.

This tendency was consistent with those of American fifth and sixth graders (Salomon, 1984) and Japanese junior high school students (Saga, 1990). Salomon discusses that attributing one's learning outcome to inside oneself (effort and ability) evokes more investment of one's mental effort to learning than attributing it to outside oneself (ease and difficulty of the task). This process would then affect the amount of learning from TV, since one is more likely to think that one can learn from TV because TV is easy. It would be necessary to introduce appropriate guidance for the students' use of TV in distance education as well as in regular, formal education.

Table 2. Students' motive for entering and studying at AIOU

Item	1. Accurate	2.Somewhat accurate	3. Rather inaccurate	4. Inaccurate	Average
1.want to get a university degree	72.4%	21.2%	1.9%	4.5%	1.38 (n=627)
2. want to use it as a step toward a better job	63.8	25.0	2.6	8.6	1.56 (n=613)
3. love studying in itself	81.4	16.4	1.1	1.1	1.22 (n=623)
4. want to make up for my past lack of studies	81.5	13.0	1.6	3.9	1.28 (n=623)
5. want to obtain necessary knowledge for my job	53.3	22.1	6.1	18.5	1.90 (n=610)
6. want to deepen my knowledge in the area which interests me	70.7	21.3	2.3	5.7	1.42 (n=615)
7. use it as a step for enrollment in a post-graduate course	64.8	23.7	2.1	9.5	1.56 (n=613)
8. want to obtain professional expertise	61.5	24.1	3.4	11.0	1.63 (n=618)
9. want to test my new possibilities	66.1	24.6	3.2	6.1	1.49 (n=622)
10. want to make the most of my spare time	55.6	24.3	5.8	14.3	1.79 (n=622)
11. can afford to study while staying at home	75.2	18.8	2.9	3.1	1.34 (n=622)

4. Self-confidence of achieving the goal

Students were generally very confident for achieving their goals as 46% answering "very confident" and 41% "confident".

5. Use of AIOU's instructional components

Students were requested to answer on the four-point scales for the degree of their use of six instructional components. The results are shown in Table 3. In this table, the smaller the average point is, the more frequent the use was reported to be. Except for textbooks and assignments which are both compulsory elements of AIOU's instructional system, study centre is most frequently used by the students.

Table 3. Use of instructional components

Component	1. Frequently	2. Occasionally	3. Once in a while	4. Never used	Average
1.Study Centre	30.1%	31.8%	14.0%	24.1%	2.32 (n=635)
2.Library	12.8	23.1	14.1	50.0	3.01 (n=624)
3.Radio Programme	23.2	34.0	14.2	28.6	2.48 (n=633)
4.TV Programme	25.9	29.2	12.9	32.1	2.51 (n=630)
5.Cassette	20.5	15.4	12.8	51.2	2.95 (n=615)
6.Any other*	37.5	17.6	5.7	39.2	2.46 (n=352)

* includes books, consultation, discussion, and newspaper.

6. Perceptions of one's own learning

Students' self-evaluations of their achievements for the courses were generally high as 18% answering "excellent" and 56% "good". Many students felt that they had made considerable efforts for the courses with 31% answering "very hard" and 38% "hard". As for the amount of hours for studying, 31% of the students replied that they studied one hour daily, and 46% two hours daily.

7. Evaluation of textbooks, assignments, and study centres

Students were requested to evaluate several aspects of the three instructional components of AIOU, courses and textbooks, assignments, and study centres, by the scale of "yes", "not sure", and "no". As for the courses and textbooks, all the five aspects obtained over 80% of "yes", reflecting very positive evaluations for each of them. Especially, 95% of the students answered "yes" on "the textbook improved your knowledge", and 89% on "the units were well organized". "Assignments" were evaluated even more positively. The highest 97% of "yes" was given to "answering the questions helped your study", followed by 92% to "the questions were relevant to your level of understanding of the course" and 91% to "the questions were relevant to the contents of the course".

Compared with these two components, study centres were not very highly evaluated. The highest rate of "yes" was 63% for the item "you enjoyed meeting other students", followed by 61% for "the study centre was useful for your study". A considerable number of responses was "not sure", suggesting some students have not used study centres. These figures reflect the instructional system of AIOU in which

reading textbooks and answering assignments are compulsory while attending study centres is highly expected but not compulsory.

8. Use of radio programmes

Radio was accessible by 81% of the students. During the Autumn-1989 and Spring-1990 semesters, 56% have listened to one or more AIOU programmes. As for the difficulties of receiving radio programmes, 17% mentioned unsuitable time of broadcasting, and 11% mentioned weak or no transmission.

Among the five items of 4-point scale asked to evaluate the radio programmes, students agreed with the highest response to the item "number of the radio programmes should be increased", followed by "the programmes were relevant to the course content". Students stated various proposals for improving the radio programmes, of which "changing time to night" was mentioned by 10%, and together with changing it to morning, evening, and holiday, a considerable number of proposals was about the change of broadcasting schedule. Other statements included "longer duration of the programmes", "increasing the number of programmes", "expanding the coverage of broadcast", and "establishing a separate channel".

9. Use of television programmes

Television was accessible by 60% of the students. Nearly 50% have watched one or more AIOU programmes during the last two semesters. Students stated a number of difficulties in watching television which included "no television / television set is expensive" (mentioned by 18%), "unsuitable time of broadcasting" (15%), "unstable electricity / poor reception" (4%), and so on.

As with the use of radio programmes, students evaluated the television programmes on eight items of 4-point scale as well. The highest agreed item was "number of the TV programmes should be increased", followed by "the programmes were relevant to the course content" and "the programmes helped you understand the course better". Compared with these items, relatively low agreements were made with the expressive aspects of programming, including such items as "the programmes used different formats other than the form of lectures" and "the programmes showed a lot of pictures to explain concepts, processes, etc". Students also stated proposals for improving the television programmes. Similar to the the proposals for radio, "changing time to night" was mentioned by 10%, and together with changing it to morning, evening, and holiday, a considerable number of proposals were made about the change of broadcasting schedule. Other statements included "longer duration of the programmes", "increasing the number of programmes", "establishing a separate channel", "improving the reception", and "using more pictures, audiovisual aids, and computers".

Table 4. Perceptions of the Importance of instructional components

Instructional component	1.Very important	2.Important	3.Not very important	4.Un-important	Average point (N)
Attending the class at study centre	43.5%	33.9%	19.2%	3.5%	1.83 (626)
Reading the textbook	85.5	14.4	0.2	0.0	1.15 (640)
Answering the assignment	83.1	15.2	1.1	0.6	1.19 (639)
Listening to the radio programmes	28.5	45.4	22.3	3.8	2.01 (624)
Watching the TV programme	41.4	42.7	13.4	2.6	1.77 (614)
Meeting and talking to the tutor	54.3	32.0	12.1	1.6	1.61 (628)
Meeting and talking to other students	40.0	42.1	15.7	2.2	1.80 (626)
Using a cassette	32.4	36.9	23.7	6.9	2.05 (620)
Using a library	44.9	41.9	11.3	1.9	1.70 (626)
Reviewing the returned assignments	65.0	30.9	3.0	1.1	1.40 (634)
Attending the exam. and making an effort	85.8	13.6	0.6	0.0	1.15 (634)

10. Perceptions of the importance of instructional components

AIOU, as a distance education institution, uses various means for instruction. Students were asked how they perceive the relative importance of eleven instructional components for completing the courses on the 4-point scale ranging from "very important" to "unimportant". The results are shown in Table 4, in which the smaller the average point is, the more important that component is perceived to be. Students perceived "reading the textbook" and "attending the examination and making an effort" as the most important elements of studying at AIOU. Very close to these, they also perceived "answering the assignment" as more important than other elements. These results are very natural because the three elements which were perceived as more important than others are all compulsory in every B.A. course at AIOU.

Results of the questionnaire survey of the tutors

1. Profile of the tutors

A total of 188 tutors returned the questionnaire. About 34% of them teach "Islamic Studies". Other subjects include "Functional English", "Pakistan Studies", and so on. Female tutors consisted of 13%. The tutors' ages ranged from 27 (female) to 68 (male), with an average of 44. Tutors from the state of Punjab comprised 65%. Nearly 61% of the tutors had experience as an AIOU tutor for more than three years. They have a full-time job in colleges (78%), universities (9%), schools (7%), and other institutes. Nearly half of them had 7 to 9 tutorial sessions for AIOU in one semester.

2. Perception of the work as an AIOU tutor

Tutors were asked to evaluate how demanding the seven elements of their work are in terms of their time and effort on the 4-point scales with the point ranging from "too demanding" to "not very demanding". The results are shown in Table 5, in which the smaller the average point is, the more demanding that particular work is perceived to be.

"Assignment comments, grading, correction, and evaluation" was perceived by the tutors as the most demanding work. The average point was 1.90, which was the lowest among the seven items.Those who responded to this item "too demanding" comprised 34%, and "very demanding" 28%. Very closely perceived to this element is "academic guidance to students"(average point=2.04).

Tutors were also asked how they perceived they were effectively functioning on three items concerning the major aspects of their work. The results are shown in Table 6. The work tutors perceived they conduct most effectively was "assignment comments, grading, correction, and evaluation". The average point was 1.64, and those who answered "very effective" comprised 52%, and "effective" 37%. "Academic guidance to students" was perceived as equally effective, with the average point of 1.69. Tutors generally tended to think that the work as an AIOU tutor is demanding, although they conduct their work effectively.

Free answers to the question of improving the tutors' work included "increasing the number of tutorial sessions" (12%), and "making students' attendance at tutorial sessions compulsory" (12%). Answers which stated the both points comprised 6%.

3. Evaluation of students' academic performances

Students' academic performances were evaluated in several aspects from the tutors' viewpoint. The results are shown in Table 7. Here, the smaller the average point is, the higher that aspect is evaluated. "Achievement on assignments" was most highly evaluated. Nearly as high as this item was "return rates of assignments". Compared with these aspects for assignments, tutors' evaluation of students' performance at

Table 5. Perceptions of the work as an AIOU tutor

Element of the work	1.Too demanding	2.Very demanding	3.Demanding	4.Not very demanding	Average Point (N)
Academic guidance to students	35.1%	33.0%	24.5%	7.4%	2.04 (188)
Assignment comments, grading, etc.	34.0	45.2	17.0	3.7	1.90 (188)
Conducting face-to-face tutorials	32.3	28.0	23.1	16.7	2.24 (186)
Liaison with regional office	23.0	19.8	40.1	17.1	2.51 (187)
Feedback to course coordinators	22.5	23.5	33.2	20.9	2.52 (187)
Reporting students' progress to regnl office	29.0	24.2	32.3	14.5	2.32 (186)
Holding practical sessions/workshops	31.8	19.1	21.7	27.4	2.45 (157)

Table 6. Perception of effectiveness of the work

Element of the work	1.Very effective	2.Effective	3.Average	4.Need improvement	Average point (N)
Academic guidance to students	51.6%	35.1%	6.4%	6.9%	1.69 (188)
Assignment comments, grading, etc.	51.6	37.2	6.4	4.8	1.64 (188)
Conducting face-to-face tutorials	48.6	35.7	7.0	8.6	1.76 (185)

tutorial sessions is rather low as shown in such items as "attendance rates of tutorial sessions" and "performance at tutorial sessions". This evaluation corresponds with the free statements written for improving the tutors' work.

As for the tutors' evaluation of students' motivations, many tutors perceived that AIOU students' motivations were higher than those of other regular on-campus college students.

Table 7. Evaluation of students' academic performances

Aspect of performance	1.Very good	2.Good	3.Average	4.Bad	Average point (N)
Return rates of assignments	23.4%	50.5%	23.9%	2.1%	2.05 (188)
Achievement on assignments	24.5	51.1	22.3	2.1	2.02 (188)
Attendance rates of tutorial sessions	8.7	8.2	50.0	33.2	3.08 (184)
Performance at tutorial sessions	13.0	33.7	44.6	8.7	2.49 (184)
Performance at examinations	12.1	39.4	46.1	2.4	2.39 (165)
Pass rates	20.9	43.0	34.9	1.2	2.16 (172)

4. Perception of the importance of instructional components

. The same questions asked to the students were also given to the tutors for their perceptions of the relative importance of eleven instructional components of AIOU. The results are shown in Table 8, in which the smaller the average point is, the more important that component is perceived to be. Tutors perceived "reading the textbook" (the average point=1.13) as the most important element of studying at AIOU, followed by "answering the assignments" (1.17), and "meeting and talking to the tutors" (1.27). Interesting enough, tutors tended to judge importance in terms of their own work, while students were likely to attach it to compulsory elements of their course work.

References

Saga, H. (1990). *Japanese children's preconceptions of different media as related to their learning*. Working Paper 009-E-90, National Institute of Multimedia Education, Chiba, Japan.

Salomon, G. (1984). Television is "easy" and print is "tough".: The different investment of mental effort in learning as a function of perceptions and attributions. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76, 647-658.

Table 8. Perceptions of the Importance of instructional components (Tutors)

Instructional component	1.Very important	2.Important	3.Not very important	4.Un-important	Average point (N)
Attending the class at study centre	66.3%	29.9%	2.7%	1.1%	1.39 (187)
Reading the textbook	87.7	11.8	0.5	0.0	1.13 (187)
Answering the assignment	84.0	14.9	1.1	0.0	1.17 (188)
Listening to the radio programmes	40.4	45.7	12.2	1.6	1.75 (188)
Watching the TV programme	46.8	43.1	9.0	1.1	1.64 (188)
Meeting and talking to the tutor	73.8	25.7	0.5	0.0	1.27 (187)
Meeting and talking to other students	42.6	44.7	10.6	2.1	1.72 (188)
Using a cassette	30.9	48.4	17.0	3.7	1.94 (188)
Using a library	60.1	36.7	3.2	0.0	1.43 (188)
Reviewing the returned assignments	64.9	32.4	2.1	0.5	1.38 (188)
Attending the exam. and making an effort	71.7	27.8	0.5	0.0	1.29 (187)